

Event Planning for Mass Gatherings

Updated January 2021

Lewis and Clark County is averaging 42 cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people per day. Our local hospital and most if not all of its ICU bed capacity is full, businesses are losing staff to local requirements for quarantine or isolation, and we all continue to be impacted and put at greater risk by the ongoing high level of local disease. We understand continuing to adhere to state and local requirements to limit the risk of COVID-19 is hard and the ongoing high level of local cases is discouraging but we must all continue to work together to end the pandemic. To improve our local disease status and further limit our local risk of disease we must continue to follow public health guidelines such as masking, physical distancing, and avoiding unnecessary gatherings.,

As a result of our current high level of disease, all of Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health's *Emergency Rules and Regulations in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* are currently in effect. The level of regulation is dependent on community COVID-19 status, as identified the local COVID-19 Decision-Making-Dashboard. These can be found at the following link:

www.lccountymt.gov/health/covid-19/local-covid-19-decision-making-dashboard.html. Also, for the most up to date information on local COVID-19 disease status, vaccine operations, and much more visit the local COVID-19 Hub at <https://www.helenamontanamaps.org/LCPHCovid19HUB/>.

Events and gatherings between 25 and 249 people must adhere to the following:

1. Submit on the form provided by Lewis and Clark Public Health to Lewis and Clark Public Health a detailed plan outlining protective measures and environmental controls to reduce the risk of disease transmission at least thirty (30) days prior to event or gathering. This can be found at the following link:
https://www.lccountymt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/Health/Disease_Control/Phase_2_Guidance/Planning_Form_for_Group_Gathering_Rev_01121_writeable.pdf
2. Maintain strict physical distancing of 6 feet between individuals or between groups of family members.
3. Follow guidance provided by Lewis and Clark Public Health regarding event planning and ensure plan is adhered to at the time of the event or gathering.
4. Spectators of youth activities shall be considered a separate and distinct event from the youth activity.

5. Youth activities, defined as both community-based and school sanctioned, are not subject to this order. Youth activities includes all youth participants, coaches, trainers, and officials necessary for the youth activity.
6. Schools are exempt from the 250-person limit with an approved plan by Lewis & Clark Public Health.

This guidance offers strategies to help you plan for and implement ways in which to better protect all involved in a mass gathering. Organizers should continually assess, based on current conditions, whether to postpone, cancel, or significantly reduce the number of attendees (if possible) for mass gatherings. Please understand that the conditions of regulation and restrictions are subject to change. Please develop or amend the plan with the following:

1. Health Assessment

- a. **Assess health** of all employees and attendees. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 must be sent home. These include cough, difficulty breathing, fever, repeated shaking with chills, the chills, body aches, headache, sore throat and new loss of taste or smell.
 - i. **Please identify how you will actively screen health status.**
- b. Please see the guidance developed for responding to a COVID positive employee.
<https://www.lccountymt.gov/health/covid-19/phase-two-guidance.html>
- c. We encourage you to **develop a roster** of all attendees with their contact information if needed for contact investigations should someone at the event test positive later for COVID-19.

2. Group Size- ***Note that current policy may be in place that affects this number***

- a. Limit groups to 25 or fewer people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.
- b. Cancel groups larger than 25 people unless physical distancing can be maintained.
- c. Submit an event planning form for any event or gathering for 25-249 people to Lewis and Clark Public Health.
- d. Consider or utilize ticketing to limit access to events to ticketed event goers only. Requiring tickets, whether or not there is a cost, allows you to predict the number of people at your event.
- e. Limit event sizes to allow for social distancing.
- f. Require reserved seating.
 - i. Do not allow for general standing areas.
 - ii. Require that each ticket correlates with a reserved seat.
 - iii. Encourage event goers to sit with household members.
- g. If possible, provide spacing between different ticket groups.

- i. E.g. offer ticket options in groups of 2, 4, 5, etc., with empty chairs between the grouped tickets.
- h. Consider offering more events with fewer event goers. (E.g. Three smaller concerts instead of one large concert.)
- i. Continue to offer virtual events or event streaming.

3. Physical Distancing

- a. Enable physical distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals and non-family groups in gatherings of any size.
- b. Consider implementing staggered entering and exiting of the facility to avoid congestion. Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas.
- c. Offer flexible hours to provide for social distancing
 - i. Allow event spaces to open earlier or close later for ample time for guests to move in and out.
- d. Block off rows or sections of seating in order to space people at least 6 feet apart.
- e. Eliminate lines or queues if possible or encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing signs or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.

4. **Face Coverings:** Definition: A fabric, paper, or disposable face covering, including face shields that covers the nose and mouth and which does not have an exhalation valve.

Indoor Spaces

- a. All businesses, government offices, or other persons responsible for *indoor spaces open to the public* shall require and take *reasonable measures* to ensure that all employees, contractors, volunteers, customers, or other members of the public wear a face covering that covers their mouth and nose at all times while entering or remaining in any indoor spaces open to the public.
- b. Face coverings shall be provided for all employees and volunteers.
- c. A face shield is an acceptable form of face covering.
- d. All points of entry open to the public shall have a **clearly visible sign** posted stating: "Mask or face covering use required for ages five and older." Signs are available on our web page.
- e. "*Indoor spaces open to the public*" include, but are not limited to lobbies, common areas, elevators, bathrooms, meeting rooms, or other spaces where people gather. The term includes all modes of public or commercial transportation.
- f. Only those employees, volunteers, and contractors in *public-facing* workspaces are required to wear face coverings as specified in this directive.
 - i. *Public facing* means employees are in contact with the public. Employees that are not public facing should wear a mask when arriving and exiting the workplace and using common areas. Spaces where more than one employee is working would be considered a common area requiring the use of a mask.

- g. Plexi-glass barriers are not a replacement for wearing a mask. Partitions that effectively create an enclosed barrier within an indoor space may render face coverings unnecessary, but the plan will need to be reviewed by the health department prior to implementation.
- h. *Reasonable measures*” means affected entities must actively enforce the directive in the following manner:
 - i. deny entry;
 - ii. refuse service; or
 - iii. ask the affected individual(s) to leave the business.
- i. Event Organizers are allowed to ask why someone isn’t wearing a mask. They can ask about how to accommodate a disability; if an individual refuses accommodation or it is not possible to accommodate them, business owners may nonetheless ask the customer to leave. Business owners do not need proof an individual has a disability, and we don’t recommend asking for proof.

Outdoor Activities

- a. At any organized outdoor activity where physical distancing is not possible or is not observed, sponsors shall require and take *reasonable measures* to ensure that all persons attending an organized outdoor activity wear a face covering that covers their mouth and nose at all times.
- b. At all outdoor gatherings of 25 or more people, whether or not it constitutes an organized outdoor activity, all individuals are required to wear a face covering while in attendance when it is impracticable to maintain 6 feet of physical distance at all times, or when attendees are not observing at least 6 feet of physical distance from others.

5. Staffing

- a. Designate a staff person for each shift to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns.
- b. Share information about COVID-19 with staff, participants, suppliers, vendors, and others. Keep them up to date on your local situation and designate a way for them to communicate with you if they have concerns. You can find timely and accurate information about COVID-19 on our web page www.lccountymt.gov/covid-19.
- c. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training for those roles, including your own. Consider avoiding the use of event staff who are at high risk for complications from COVID-19, like those over age 65 and those who have chronic medical conditions.

6. Food and Beverage Service

- a. There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread by food. However, people sharing utensils and congregating around food service areas can pose a risk.
- b. If the event will have food or drink and will not be held at a licensed food facility, then you may be required to obtain a special event or temporary event food permit. Contact Lewis & Clark Public Health at 457-8900 for permitting requirements.

- c. If you're working with a caterer or other event provider, make sure they have information about COVID-19 and require their staff to stay home if sick.
 - i. Make sure food servers wear gloves and follow required food-safety standards.
 - ii. **Self-service food bars and buffets are not permitted at this time.**
- d. See the Guidance for Food, Beverage and Gaming on our webpage for additional information.

<https://www.lccountymt.gov/health/covid-19/phase-two-guidance.html>

7. Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.

- a. Place hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol in several locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- b. Provide hand-washing facilities with soap and water and single-use towels. If soap and water are not readily available, provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- c. Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles throughout the facility.
- d. Discourage handshaking and encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.

8. Implement engineering controls as appropriate for your business (those things that do not require action by the employee). These might include:

- a. Installing physical barriers, such as clear-plastic sneeze guards at ticket booths.
- b. Installing high-efficiency air filters.
- c. Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment.

9. Routinely clean all surfaces touched by customers. A list of sanitizers effective for COVID-19 is located on the EPA website: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. Be sure to **strictly follow specified contact times and mix rates.**

- a. Ask customers and employees to exchange cash or card payments by placing them on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand to avoid direct hand-to-hand contact.
- b. Make sure high-contact surfaces and objects at the venue are disinfected **before** the event. Consider disinfecting common hand-contact areas (like doorknobs and pens) at least once an hour during the event.
- c. Discourage people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
- d. Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment, or supplies by staff members.
- e. Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible; otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of staff members or attendees at a time, and clean and disinfect them between use.

If you have questions or need technical assistance, please call Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8900. Thank you for protecting our community from COVID-19.

If you suspect Coronavirus, contact your medical provider.

For a link to this document and other local information: www.lccountymt.gov/covid-19

CDC link for guidance on mass gatherings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/largeevents/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>